

Ward Councillor's report for Braunston Annual Parish Meeting 2022

The first 12 months of elected as one of your ward councillors to our new unitary West Northants Council seems to have flown by! It has been a pleasure to get to know some of your residents, organisations and Parish Council during the last year. Certainly, it has been an eventful one for everyone getting familiarised with a new council and its councillors and with the world slowly opening up for us all post pandemic. And who could have imagined last May that two areas of international conflict in Afghanistan and Ukraine would have brought global issues so much closer to home. Around 200 Afghan nationals having been living in hotels in Northampton since last September and are still awaiting permanent rehousing. Meanwhile around 100 Ukrainians have arrived in West Northants under the Homes for Ukraine scheme and a further 400 are expected. I have been able to offer accommodation in my home to a Ukrainian couple who arrived over the Jubilee weekend and are settling in quickly.

Braunston could be facing major change if either of the two large sites between the village and Daventry included in the Consultation on West Northants new Strategic Plan become "preferred" sites in the full draft plan rather than potential sites. The potential residential site is for 1200 dwellings and the employment site is 90 hectares. It is acknowledged in the Consultation document that both sites would hugely impact the local landscape and all but join up the village with Daventry.

I brought some exhibition boards to the village hall in December to raise awareness of these sites. I am grateful to Cllr Mawer for showing me the significant viewpoints of the village that would be so impacted by further housing and industrial estates. This was very helpful when showing the location of the sites to Cllr Jonathan Nunn, Leader of West Northants Council. I invited him to walk down the path from Middlemore to give him a better understanding of the scale of the potential development and the impact this would have on the views into and from the village.

I was pleased to support Braunston Heart with a grant from the £2,500 councillor covid support fund allocated to each ward councillor during the last financial year. Another grant was awarded to supply breakfasts to children attending Braunston school. With the cost of living, emergency impacting family budgets so drastically there are only going to be more children and families experiencing hardship in our villages and one of the ways of combatting food poverty is provided by community larders. These supply food that would otherwise be thrown away, so address food waste as well as food insecurity. This is an initiative that your community may be interested in supporting.

The Council is currently deciding how to distribute this year's allocation of the Household Support Fund, which needs to be spent by the end of September. Households experiencing severe hardship could be eligible for up to £100 voucher for food or energy payments. Last year the Council excluded residents who rely on oil or bottled gas for heating and hot water by only allowing those on pre-payment meters to apply for prepayment meters. (Government guidance states that the Fund should

apply to any type of fuel.) I have been raising awareness of how this disadvantages our rural communities who rely on oil and have been assured that this year's Household Support scheme will be open to struggling rural residents who are off grid.

Beyond Braunston I have enjoyed making good working relationships with the other villages in the ward and have attended the majority of the monthly PC meetings in all 7 villages, providing a report prior to each meeting. Casework is also keeping me busy, as well as committee work (I sit on the Daventry Area Planning committee and the Audit and Governance committee and Sustainability Working Group.) This Working Group has been set up to ensure that West Northants Council delivers on its net zero and sustainability goals. These are ambitious plans and I shall be reporting on their progress in my monthly parish council reports.

Cllr Rosie Humphreys

rosie.humphreys@westnorthants.gov.uk

07890112504